

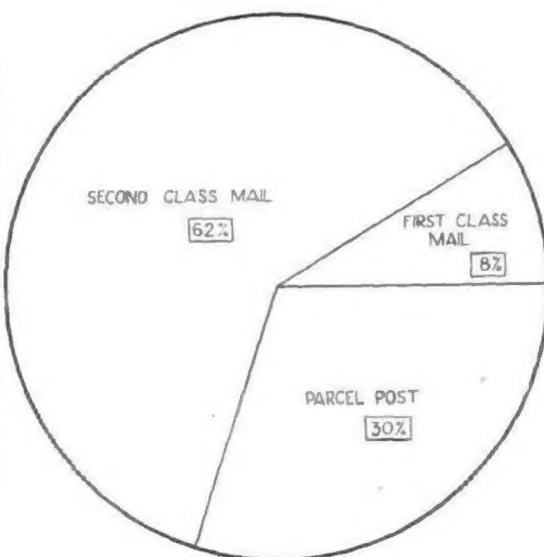
expected to compete with existing surface transport.

The Empire air mail scheme provided for the carriage of all letters, letter packets and postcards at a flat rate of 1½d. per half-ounce in the case of letters, and one penny for postcards. The agreement with Imperial Airways was for fifteen years.

The first stage of the scheme was inaugurated in June, 1937, when mails were carried to East and South Africa; the second stage in February, 1938, with mails to India and Malaya; and the third and final stage in July, 1938, with mails to Australia.

In order to make the plan self-supporting so far as our own

The proportionate weight of mail in the different categories now being dispatched from this country. First-class mail includes letters and postcards, while second-class mail includes printed and commercial papers, samples and so forth.



Post Office was concerned it would have been necessary to fix the rate at 2½d. per half-ounce, but it was considered fairer merely to reduce the weight allowance and keep the normal Imperial postage rate of 1½d., particularly since 70 per cent. of all letters posted for Empire destinations were within the lower weight-limit. The all-up scheme provided for three services a week to East Africa; two to South Africa; four to India; and three to Malaya and Australia—with, of course, the use of appropriate feeder lines. Eventually it was hoped that the service would be accelerated so that Karachi was reached in 2½ days, Durban in 4 days and Sydney in 7 days. The respective times by sea were 14, 14 and 32 days.

For the benefit of those who imagine that the weight of first-class mail which is carried by air forms a large proportion of the total carried, it is worth repeating Mr. Lumley's statement that this section comprises only 8 per cent. of the total.

More interesting and complicated were the arrangements for the development of European all-up mail services. Again in 1936 the Post Office decided that all letters and postcards addressed to a European country, and prepaid at the ordinary rate of postage (2½d. for the first ounce and 1½d. for each additional ounce), would be entitled to transmission by the fastest means of conveyance, whether aeroplane or otherwise. In certain cases, notably between London and Paris, the use of air services offered no particular advantage, but for the rest of Europe it was decided that the provision of two dispatches a day towards each important centre would be aimed at. The first dispatch would be by night service, for those letters posted in the ordinary way in the evening, and the second a day service for further letters posted up to midnight in London and at normal times in the provinces.

In March, 1936, the first all-up mail for a European destination was carried on the British Airways' service to Copenhagen and Stockholm. In July of the same year a corresponding night service was instituted in which British Airways operated in pool with the Danish D.D.L. and the Swedish A.B.A. In August last year arrangements were made for British Airways to share with the German D.L.H. the operation of night services between Croydon, Cologne, Hanover and Berlin—a route which had previously been covered for many years by D.L.H. six times a week. In September, 1937, mail for Switzerland and France began to be sent by services from Croydon.

The Future

At present twenty-four European countries were served by the all-up system, the only exceptions being Malta, Gibraltar, Spain and Portugal, though Malta would be included in the near future when the new landplane route to India was being used. The decision of the European air companies to accept mails at a standard rate per tonne-kilometre, which was less than half of that for surcharges mail in the past, had materially facilitated the development of the system. At present some 850 tons per year of mail left this country by air for European destinations.

Dealing with the future, Mr. Lumley mentioned the projected British air service to West Africa, in which mail would be sent at flat rates, and also the projected services across the North Atlantic. On the latter it would be necessary at first for a special fee to be charged. When, eventually, a British air service was operated across the South Atlantic the Post Office hoped to be able to reduce the very high postage rates at present charged for transmission to American countries. About 90 per cent. of mail carried from this country was now flown by British services.

In conclusion, Mr. Lumley acknowledged the debt of the Post Office to two volunteer bodies—the Postmaster General's Advisory Council and the Post Office Publicity Committee.

RECRUITING in the RIGHT WAY

A VISIT to the London Recruiting Depot of the Royal Air Force at Victory House, Kingsway, is quite an interesting experience. Group Capt. E. R. C. Nanson, C.B.E., D.S.C., A.F.C. (retd.), is the Inspector of Recruiting, and to meet him again was to recall pleasant memories of Schneider contest days at Calshot, when he commanded the station.

The waiting room is attractive, and the recruits must be very favourably impressed by their first experience of the Air Force.

A batch of prospective recruits was lined up in the passage waiting to be examined in turn. After the details of names, etc., have been recorded, the medical examination is carried out at the depot.

Attention was drawn to four new publications which have just been issued, and which will be distributed throughout the country, mainly to schools and other educational establishments. One quite handsome photographic album is entitled *Learn a Trade in the Royal Air Force*, and shows photographs of airmen engaged in most of the trades which are practised in the R.A.F. Against each trade is a table showing the method of enlistment into that trade, the period of instruction, the period of service, and the daily pay. Twenty-four trades are thus described, including airman pilot and air gunner, which are not "trades" in the Air Force meaning of the word. The other three new publications are pamphlets which will be distributed to applicants free. One, *Royal Air Force—A Life for Men*, gives the prospects which are open to a recruit who enlists as an aircraftman or an aircrafthand, while the others deal with aircraft apprentices and boy entrants. These recruiting depots deal chiefly with direct-entry aircraftmen and aircrafthands. The latter word implies an airman who has not been accepted into a recognised R.A.F. trade. Group Capt. Nanson remarked that about 80 per cent. of the enlisted air-

crafthands are taught a trade after being accepted into the Service. It must be understood that this direct enlistment supplements and does not displace the entry into the Service of ex-apprentices from the Schools of Technical Training at Halton, Cranwell and Cosford. Apprentices enter these schools, and boy entrants apply for enlistment through educational authorities, though a recruiting depot will always give information to those interested. The candidates for boy entrant are interviewed at the Reception Depot at West Drayton.

The present requirements of the R.A.F. are 30,000 recruits a year, the recruiting year ending on March 31. In the first eight months of the present year over 20,000 recruits have been secured, which is two-thirds of the number wanted in two-thirds of the time. Not too bad!

The chief need at present is for more wireless operators. This trade calls for rather a higher standard of education than most other trades, and for that reason it is harder to fill its ranks. The new photographic album gives the following facts about this trade: Method of enlistment—as boys between the ages of 15½ and 17½ or as aircraftmen aged 17½ to 35; period of service—until the age of 27 for boys, six years for aircraftmen; daily pay—3s. 6d. to 5s. 6d.; instruction—twelve months' course for boys or six months' course for aircraftmen in operation of wireless sets on the ground and in the air. It sounds attractive. One should note the difference between the trade of wireless operator and that of wireless operator mechanic. Nearly all the latter are ex-apprentices from the Electrical and Wireless School at Cranwell, but sometimes a specially good wireless operator may be trained for the higher grade, when the pay is 3s. 9d. to 6s. per diem.

An hour at the London Recruiting Depot shows that so far as personnel goes the R.A.F. is expanding in a very satisfactory way, both in quantity and quality.

F. A. DE V. R.